3: Whited G-5 (1890) 1894 NT15 River Yumans
Papago NV28

133 PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION.—The territory covered by the Papagos in their migrations, and
134 in which their villages are located, consists of mountain ranges and the intervening valleys. The soil of the valleys contains a considerable proportion of clay, so that it is all called adobe soil. In the mesas or plains occasional strips of sand occur. Along the arroyos, or dry water channels, deposits of gravel are numerous. The arroyos become raging torrents during the rainy season, rendering travel impossible or dangerous during the temporary flood. The soil of the foothills is very rocky. Alkali is present in the soil in varying proportions, giving the characteristic name to the vast stretch of country known as the alkali desert. It is not the presence of alkali, however, that makes the desert, but the absence of water. An abundant water supply renders this alkali soil equal in fertility to any soil in the country. As it is, the valleys contain a great deal of arable land,
137 which is evident from the great areas covered with grass, which form the stock ranges, and from occasional sections where weeds grow so luxuriantly after the rainy season as to overtop a man on horseback. These portions of the valleys are covered with mesquite trees and bushes, and also sagebrush, but these sections produce abundant crops when irrigated.

132 CLIMATE.—The climate is very mild, being neither extremely cold in winter nor hot in summer. The mean average temperature during the summer of 1890 was 81.8°, and during the winter of 1889–1890 it was 52.6°.

312 WATER SUPPLY.—There are occasional wells found among the Indian villages. Natural water holes are quite numerous, and by raising embankments of earth in favorable localities the Papagos make huge ponds or reservoirs, which they call tanks. These natural and artificial reservoirs are only serviceable for the temporary storage of water, and toward the last they become filthy mudholes. The Indians, however, continue to use the water as long as it can possibly be considered a fluid. In one place the Papagos have dug a well 80 feet deep, and with incredible labor have made a footpath from the top of the ground to the level of the water.

Water is found by boring at a depth of from 200 to 600 feet, but no flowing wells have yet been obtained in the territory. The water in the wells rises from 50 to 150 feet, and then is raised to the surface by steam pumps. The Indians, however, have not the financial resources with which to sink or operate artesian wells. When their tanks are exhausted they remove with droves and herds to the valleys and canyons in the mountains, frequently crossing over into Mexico.

137 TIMBER.—The varieties of timber within the Papago range are the willow, cottonwood, mesquite, palloverde, and on the southern and western mountain slopes the oak. The mesquite is the most common timber, as it grows freely on the mesas. It rivals the hickory as firewood, throwing out great heat, and the coals retain fire even longer than coals of hickory. The mesquite, however, is very easy to cut, and is handled with far less labor than hickory.

137 FRUITS AND NUTS.—The sahuaro (giant cactus), which grows on the rocky soil of the foothills and covers the moderate mountain ranges, rises in height from 10 to 60 feet, and is a mass of vegetable matter, supported by an internal skeleton of ribs or poles of woody fiber. The fruit of this remarkable plant grows out of the top of the trunk and arms, and constitutes an important article of food, the Papagos almost living upon it during June, July,
272 and a part of August. They gather it with long poles, and eat it either fresh or after it has been dried. They make
262 from the juice a syrup and a drink which is slightly charged with alcohol. Although the ribs of the sahuaro are
[273] very valuable, the Indians never destroy the plant, and are greatly incensed if a white man cuts one down; but
[313] when the cactus dies and the vegetable matter dries, powders, and falls away, leaving the ribs exposed and bare, they are used as supports for the dirt roofs of adobe houses, for the sides of houses when plastered with mud, for poultry and pigeon houses, and other small structures.

262 The Papagos eat the fruit of the prickly pear cactus and make a syrup from its juice; from the mescal (sweet
[273] aloe) a highly intoxicating drink is made. The root, which is bulbous, grows partly under and partly above the ground, and when roasted it is very delicious, and great quantities are consumed by the Papagos. They dig out of the ground a vegetable which appears to be a species of wild onion, but they call it a groundnut, and relish it
[388] highly when boiled. A very useful plant found in large quantities, called the soap plant (amole), forms a substitute for soap.

282 The tannin root, resembling the sweet potato in appearance, grows in great profusion. It contains a large portion of tannic acid, and is a substitute for the astringent barks, hemlock and oak, which are used in tanneries.

262 FOOD.—In addition to the fruits, nuts, and flesh already mentioned, their food consists of wheat flour (usually
252 formed by the women on a metate) prepared in simple ways, parched wheat and corn, boiled wheat and corn, flour made from the mesquite bean, beans, boiled squash, green and dried squash seeds, beef, and poultry.

181 INDUSTRY.—The Papagos seem to be esteemed by the whites in general as the best Indians in the territory.
[464] They are industrious, and are good help in mines, on ranches, in the harvest field, and on stock ranges. They easily learn the mechanical arts, and set and handle mining drills as well as white men. The engineer at the Quijotoa mines said that his assistant was a Papago, and that he was fully competent to run the engine.

[312] In practical irrigation the Indians are conceded to be the superiors of the whites, and in their domain this is the foundation of agricultural skill. When properly educated there can be no doubt of their ability to acquire the scientific principles of the art.